

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (Currently Amended) A medical probe, comprising:  
an elongate member having a proximal end and a distal end;  
an ablative electrode element mounted to the distal end of the elongate member, the electrode element being exposed to contact bodily fluid; and  
a protective element mounted to the distal end of the elongate member, wherein the protective element at least partially covers the ablative electrode element to prevent the ablative electrode element from contacting solid tissue.
2. (Original) The medical probe of claim 1, wherein the protective element comprises a cage assembly.
3. (Original) The medical probe of claim 2, wherein the cage assembly includes a proximal end, a distal end, and a plurality of struts secured between the proximal end and the distal end.
4. (Original) The medical probe of claim 2, wherein the cage assembly comprises a ring element that coaxially surrounds and is slidable relative to the elongate member.
5. (Original) The medical probe of claim 4, wherein one of the proximal end and the distal end of the cage assembly comprises the ring element, and the other of the proximal end and distal end is fixedly secured to the elongate member.
6. (Original) The medical probe of claim 5, wherein the proximal end of the cage assembly comprises the ring element, and the distal end of the cage assembly is fixedly secured to the elongate member.

7. (Original) The medical probe of claim 5, wherein the distal end of the cage assembly comprises the ring element, and the proximal end of the cage assembly is fixedly secured to the elongate member.

8. (Original) The medical probe of claim 1, further comprising a sleeve having a lumen in which the elongate member is slidably disposed.

9. (Original) The medical probe of claim 1, wherein the protective element has an expanded configuration when outside the lumen of the sleeve, and a collapsed configuration when inside the lumen of the sleeve.

10. (Original) The medical probe of claim 1, wherein the protective element is made from an electrically non-conductive material.

11. (Original) The medical probe of claim 1, wherein the protective element comprises a braided or woven structure.

12. (Original) The medical probe of claim 1, further comprising a handle assembly secured to a proximal end of the elongate member.

13. (Original) The medical probe of claim 12, wherein the handle assembly comprises a steering mechanism.

14. (Original) The medical probe of claim 1, wherein the elongate member is a catheter member.

15. (Currently Amended) The medical probe of claim 1, wherein the ablative electrode element is an a ground electrode element.

16. (Currently Amended) The medical probe of claim 1, further comprising:

an additional ablative electrode element mounted to the distal end of the elongate member, the additional electrode element being exposed to contact bodily fluid; and

an additional protective element mounted to the distal end of the elongate member, the additional protective element at least partially covering the additional ablative electrode element to prevent the additional ablative electrode element from contacting solid tissue.

17. (Currently Amended) The medical probe of claim 1, further comprising:

an additional ablative electrode element mounted to the distal end of the elongate member, wherein the protective element at least partially covers the ablative electrode element and the additional ablative electrode element.

18. (Currently Amended) The medical probe of claim 1, wherein the protective element completely covers circumscribes the ablative electrode element.

19. (Currently Amended) A method of treating solid tissue in a body, comprising:

inserting an ablative electrode element in the body;

placing the ablative electrode element adjacent the tissue; and

contacting the electrode element with bodily fluid;

maintaining a distance between the ablative electrode element and the solid tissue using a protective element that circumscribes at least a portion of the ablative electrode element; and

conveying electrical energy to or from the electrode element, whereby the solid tissue is not ablated.

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 19, wherein the ablative electrode element is carried at a distal end of an elongate member, and the inserting comprises inserting the distal end of the elongate member into the body.

21. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 19, wherein the protective element comprises a cage assembly.